TO THE MAGISTRATES, Governours & Rulers Concerned in ENGLAND.

FRIENDS:

WE who are in scorn called *Quakers*, have been a Suffering People this many Years, under all Governments, since we were a People; and we may truly say, as once did *David* concerning *Israel* of old, *If the Lord had not been on our side, when men rose up against us, they had then swallowed us up quickly, when their Wrath was kindled against us, then the Waters had overwhelmed us, and the Streams had gone over our Souls*, Psal. 124. 2, 3, 4. yet were we never known to avenge our own Cause, nor to render Evil for Evil to the worst of our Enemies: It is not our Nature, our Principle nor Practice, to take Vengeance on the meanest of our Enemies, because Mercy and Forgiveness is seated in our hearts; and when our Enemies have hungered, we have fed them; naked, we have clothed them; sick and in Prison, we have visited them, and ministred unto them. This we speak without Boasting, in an humble Mind, knowing to whom we must render an Account of our Words and Deeds; as a People, we have all our lives long studied to be quiet, and to follow Peace with all men; neither have we eaten any mans Bread for nought, but have laboured with our hands in the thing that

is good, that we might have to give to him that needeth, desiring nothing more in this World than to **keep our Consciences void of Offence, both towards God and all men.** This (not our words, but) the whole course of our Lives hath manifested in every place and Parish where we have dwelt amongst you.

And as to the *Government* under which God hath placed us, We have, and hope ever shall readily yield all lawful and reasonable Subjection in Civil things, between Man and Man, only desiring that we may not be forced to violate our Consciences in things relating to another World, which hath no bad aspect on the Affairs of this. For CONSCIENCE is Christ's Prerogative, in which he ought to sit absolute *King*, *Governour* and *Law-giver*, as we have cause to believe; and no mortal Man (though never so great) ought to say, *Why dost thou thus?* What mortal Man on Earth can (with safety) sit Judge over another mans Conscience in things for which (he alone who acts them) must be accountable to the great God? Ought not every man to be fully perswaded in his own Mind in things of the highest concern? Can any man pay a Ransom for his Brother, or be a Pledge for his Neighbour to the great Judge of Heaven and Earth? Or who will or can acquit a man before his great Tribunal, who (in temporal or spiritual things) acts contrary to the Witness of God in his own Conscience, which is (and ever was) greater than the Witness of Man? Yet such is the blindness of your chief Priests, and the madness of their Rage against all who will not put into their Mouthes, that they immediately prepare War against them, without ever examining, whether their cause is good or bad, or seeking to convince them by sound Argument, but presently, upon any turning from them [though upon never so weighty Reasons] they fly to you to fight their Quarrel with your **Prisons, Fines, Excommunications,** &c. and few of them dare engage themselves in a fair Debate, with those they count ignorant and deluded, &c. with their spiritual Weapons, though they have been often invited thereto, which plainly demonstrates a bad Cause or a faint Heart, and that the Weapons of their Warfare are Carnal, not Spiritual, quite contrary to the Weapons of the holy Men of God recorded

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in the Scripture of Truth, who said, *Though we walk in the flesh, yet we war not after the flesh; for the Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down the Imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God*, 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. Surely they have more Confidence in a Goal or Gibbet to overcome us, than in that they call the *Word of God*, or they judge you to be either stronger or more valiant than themselves, and have more Confidence in your Sword to destroy us, than in their own convincing Arguments, to recover us; but the Prophet said, *Cursed is Man who trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, and withdraweth his Heart from the Lord*, Jer. 17. 5. And let them remember, that the first Persecutor about Religion was *Cain*, Gen. 4. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. in whose steps they tread who seek the Destruction of their fellow-Creatures about Religion and Worship; and it is an Infallible token, that their Offerings are rejected of God, as *Cain*'s was: But to salve all, they tell you, *That the Church is in danger, and therefore you must stand up for its defence, and pluck up the Weeds of* Schism *and* Heresie, *which the Devil hath sown amongst you.* A fair pretence indeed! yet herein they are manifest more to all who have an Eye to see; for if theirs were the true Church, the *Gates of Hell could not prevail against it*, Mat. 16. 18. And they who are the Sheep of Christ, and given to him, *no man can pluck them out of his hand*, John 10. 28, 29. But I suppose they mean their *Tythes* and *great Benefices* are in danger to be lost; the very Mistriss of their Religion, and the moving cause of all their undertakings in it, as is notoriously evident to all whose Eyes God hath opened.

And if they were the true *Wheat*, and others the *Tares*, which they represent to you to be such, they needed not be afraid of our growing together to the *Harvest* (i. e. the end of the World;) for thus the great Master of the *Field* (i. e. the World) said to his Servant, who brought him word, that the Enemy had sown *Tares* in the Field among his good Seed, and would in his forward zeal have pluckt them up, but his wise Master would not suffer him, *lest he should root up the* Wheat *also*, Mat. 13. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. but ordered them both to grow together to the end of World; and fully explained the Parable, and said,

He that sowed the Seed was the Son of Man, the Field was the World, and the good Seed are the Children of the Kingdom of God, and the Tares the Children of the Devil; the Enemy that sowed them is the Devil; the Harvest is the end of the World, and the Reapers are the Angels: So shall it be in the end of the World, the Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and cast them into the Furnace of Fire, there shall be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth, Mat. 13. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42. Can you believe them to be your Friends, who would have you so forward in plucking up all but themselves? If you were as forward to execute as they are to spur you on, you and they might have cause to repent of it, when it were too late; for as I said before, that Prerogative is only peculiar to the Son of God, to give Infallible Judgment of *Truth* and *Error*, and to render to every man a Reward according to his Deeds, be they good or bad; and whosoever assumes this Prerogative cannot be innocent, *for Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it,* Rom. 12. 30. Heb. 10. 30. Rom. 3. 5. And how can the Natural man perceive the things of the Spirit of God, to whom, the Apostle saith, *they are foolishness?* 1 Cor. 2. 14. Can Fines, Imprisonments or Tortures upon the Bodies of men expiate their Offences to God, or satisfie the Displeasure of Heaven, for their committing or omitting any thing or duty? Or is poor fallen man a fit Judge in the weighty matters of Gods Kingdom? Oh! weigh and consider these things well, and be not high-minded, but fear and dread the living God, unto whom you must give an Account of that Stewardship committed to you, and God Almighty give you to see both your Priests and Us; for there is little hopes of their seeing either Truth or Error, while your great Benefices, Gifts and Rewards stand so much in their Eyes; such things alwayes blinded the Eyes of the false Prophets of *Israel*, whom the true Prophets cryed Wo against, *Isa.* 56. 10, 11. *Jer.* 23. *Ezek.* 34. *Mic.* 3. 11, 12. and against the Judges also that judged for Rewards, as well as against the Priests which preached for Hire, and said, *Therefore should* Zion *be plowed as a Field, and* Jerusalem *should become an Heaps, &c.* And is not the same cause now in *England?* And how can it but produce the same Effects? What will be the end of these Covetous Practices,

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which the Prieſts and Lawyers are daily found in? Are they not the proper Marks of thoſe curſed Children which *Peter* ſpoke of, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14? And who are they that are walking in the Way of *Cain*, and running greedily after the Error of *Balaam*, which *Jude* ſpoke of, verſ. 11? I do entreat you in all Humility to conſider theſe things in this your day, and ſee who carry the Marks aforeſaid, for they are the falſe Prophets which Chriſt warned his Diſciples of, *Mat.* 7. 15, 16. who are known by their Fruits: And let all People alone in matters of Faith and Worſhip towards God; it is dangerous for you to ſit Judges over mens Faith and Conſciences in matters for which they (and they alone) are only reſponſible to God, and not to any Earthly Man: You your ſelves cannot Infallibly ſay, that the Way and Worſhip in which you now walk and worſhip, is the Way and Worſhip of God; and how then can you enjoyn others thereunto, and that under ſevere Penalties? Who doth not believe it is either the VVay or VVorſhip of God? Is not Faith towards God his own Gift? And who can perſwade the Heart but he? And all Offerings and Sacrifices without it are as the cutting off a Dogs neck, and offering Swines Blood, which is Abomination before him; therefore take heed what you do concerning this great and weighty matter; for God will not be mocked with Lip-ſervice, nor a voluntary Humility, but ſaith at this day, as in the dayes of old, **My Son, give me thy Heart**, *Prov.* 23. 26. This is the Rock upon which many of our fore-Fathers have ſuffered Ship-wrack.

So in tender Bowels of Love I entreat you beware of it, and truſt God with your Church, if it be of him, he will defend it, and no weapon formed againſt it ſhall proſper; but if it be of man he will overthrow it, and all your VViſdom, Strength and Pollicy cannot uphold nor defend it: And judge Righteouſly between a Man and his Neighbour in temporal things; for that is your place and buſineſs, and the end for which you were ordained of God; and herein as you are a Terror to Evil-doers, and a Praiſe to them who do well, you ſhall thrive and proſper, and in this ſhall your Poſterity be happy, when your Heads are in the Duſt. But let the Ark of God alone, for by his Power alone he will ſupport that: Remember when *Uzzah* put forth his hand to

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toild the Ark of God when the Oxen shooke it, how the Wrath of God rose against him, and he smote him for his fault, so that he dyed by the Ark of God, 2 *Sam.* 6. 6, 7. 1 *Chron.* 13. 10. These things were written for our Learning, that we should not tempt God, as some of them tempted him, and were destroyed. And we pray you take *Gamaliels* counsel concerning all Dissenting Parties, who live peaceably under the Government, and let us alone; *If we be of God, ye cannot overthrow us*, Acts 5. 34. *But if this work be of man, it will fall, and come to nought*; verf. 38, 39, 40. To this advice the *Jews* hearkned, though they were in great Rage against the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus, *Acts* 5. 40. and for a time let them go; but the High-Priests rage would not suffer that long to continue, but again and again stirred up the Rulers to persecute Christ and his Disciples, till they had slain them, and thereby drew down the Wrath of God upon themselves and their Posterity: And they judged themselves as safe then in their work, and thought they had as good Law for their proceedings, as you now think you now have to prosecute us by; nay, their Confidence led them to say, *His Blood be upon us and upon our Children*, Mat. 25. 25. which came to pass, to their Misery and Condemnation. Examine all Histories since the Creation, did ever any long prosper, who prosecuted any meerly for their Consciences towards God? How can any Mortal uncertain fallible man with safety prescribe a way of Worship to his fellow-Creature, in which he can assure him Acceptance with God? Did Christ (who had all Power in Heaven and Earth committed to him) enjoyn any Man or People to any Way or Worship under any outward Penalty in Body or Purse? What Example have you for such Proceedings in all the Gospel Day or Ministration? If the Scripture be your Priests Rule (as they pretend) let them shew a president for their Proceedings in this matter from any who either believed or followed Christ: Nay, when there arose a difference amongst the Disciples about *Eating*, &c. the Apostle said, *Let every man be fully perswaded in his own Mind*; and commanded *him who eateth, not to despise him who eateth not; neither him who eats not, him who eateth, for God hath received him*, Rom. 14. 2, 3, 4, 5. And writing to the *Philipians* he said, *Let us therefore, as many as be Perfect, be thus minded*;

ed; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even the same to you, Phil. 3. 15. He did not force them under Fines and Penalties into his Belief or Mind in things appertaining to the Kingdom of God. And writing to the *Corinthians*, he exhorted them *to follow him as he followed Christ*, 1 Cor. 11. 1. and no otherwise: And to *Timothy* he describes those Fruits by which Christ told his Disciples (*Mat.* 7. 16.) they should know the false Prophets, 2 *Tim.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. and commanded them *To turn from such.* And this is the reason why many turn from such now, whose fruits proclaim them rather Sons of *Beliel*, than Ministers of the Gospel. And *Peter* writing to the Saints, fully describes the false Teachers and their fruits, 2 *Pet.* chap. 2. And then *John* writing to the little Children, said, *It is the last times, as ye have heard, that Antichrist shall come; even now there are many Antichrists, whereby we know it is the last times,* 1 John 2. 18. And again, he said, *Little Children, let no man deceive you; he that doth Righteousness is Righteous, even as he is Righteous; but he that committeth Sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sinned from the beginning: And for this purpose was the Son of God made manifest, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. In this are the Children of God manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever doth not Righteousness, is not of God,* 1 John 3. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Now the God of Mercy give you Understanding more and more to discern between the Righteous and the Wicked, and between them who serve God, and they who serve him not: *Amen.* I am

A Friend to all the Upright in heart,

without Respect of Persons,

Catton in *Surrey*, the 2d of the 4th Moneth, 1682.

Ambros Rigge.

THE END.